Reflections upon Quiet Meditations

> “Open my eyes that I may behold wondrous things out of Your Law.” (Psalm 119:18)

Morale: Quietness is Productive and Beneficial
As a young adult growing up in a heavily populated city with streets overflowing with people preoccupied with their daily life’s activities, I would find myself in need of quietness; quietness that could slow down the fast pace of life whether it was school, more time needed for study and tests, or the noisiness of the streets below me. The church was often a place of retreat but I needed something to prepare me for worship, to prepare me for confession, and to prepare me for service. In order to benefit from life’s activities rather than simply fulfill them I learned to seek quietness daily.

> “It is good for a man to bear the yoke in his youth. Let me sit alone and keep silent.” (Lamentations 3: 27-28)

Morale: Quietness should be a Retreat for Self-Examination
I needed quietness and time spent alone for self-examination to allow the Holy Spirit to search within myself for any deviation from Godly ways. Searching me for any conformity to the world around me and exploring if I had strayed from any way of what I thought was acceptable to God helped to bring about the needed change I should make.

Knowing the reality of my self and my spirit required times of quietness in which I entered my room, closed its door, and sat quietly. The quietness may in the beginning simply be a void of noise and activity. But the more you train yourself to sit in quietness each day if for not more than ten minutes will help you to know the reality of your condition and help you maintain a calmer outlook upon life in general.

> “And herein do I exercise myself to have always a conscience void of offense toward God and toward men.” (Acts 24:18)

Morale: Correction of the Spirit is Essential in a Conforming World
Accepting one’s mistakes is the only way to correct them. We need quiet minutes of time to know how weak we are, how bad our condition is, and how undeserving we are of the roles we are given in this earthly life. When you begin to realize how poor you really are, then quietly meditate upon Holy Scripture that can impact your life to become more conformed to the image of the Lord Jesus Christ.

When her father came home he was filled with sorrow when his searches and inquiries came back with no trace of St. Euphrosyne. He visited the monastery several times to assist in easing his loss and pain. On one visit, the father suggested he meet a very holy monk by the name of Smaragde. Paphnutius enjoyed his time with Smaragde and never realized it was his daughter because her face had changed due to her life style and fasting. Smaragde promised Paphnutius that his grief was wasted and he would see his daughter before her death.

The news gladdened Paphnutius and he waited thirty-eight years before returning. When he did, Smaragde was very sick with stomach bleeding. She told him to stay with her for three days. On the third night, she revealed her identity to her father and made him promise not to tell anyone her secret. Paphnutius sobbed with joy and pride for his brave daughter. After her death, he could not help but tell the others her story of bravery and strength as she posed as a monk while being so weak and delicate. At her funeral to honor her sanctity, an old, blind monk was lead to her coffin and kissed the corpse and instantly regained his eyesight.

Paphnutius went back to Alexandria, sold all of his riches and spent the rest of his life at the monastery, in the cell his daughter had consecrated, lived for ten years then was buried next to St. Euphrosyne-Smaragde.
Saint Euphrosyne

A rich man in Alexandria named Paphnutius, was burdened with the sorrow of not having any children. The man was young, noble, virtuous and married but he and his wife were not conceiving children. Because he desperately wanted an heir to pass down his name and riches to, he didn’t cease to please the Heaven by serving the poor, going to church, fasting and praying.

The man visited an abbott at a monastery he donated often to. He told the abbot about his efforts and the abbot asked for all the brothers in the monastery to join in prayer and fasting for the man to be blessed with a child. After their labors, Paphnutius was blessed with a beautiful little girl he named Euphrosyne (which means joy or happiness in Greek). The young girl was baptized at age seven, five years later, at age twelve she lost her mother to a cruel sickness. At the death of her mother, Paphnutius devoted himself entirely to the education of his child.

Morale: Meditation is the most Successful Method to Discipline one’s Personality.

Quietness and meditation enhance the voice of God in your life. It stops the wandering mind and the senses going astray with the things of this world. His Grace Bishop Youannis, the late bishop of Garbrio, often said that the quietness of retreat was the landing place for Holy inspiration.

For Elijah, the prophet, when he was alone he ate heavenly food. When he was among the people he often had to ask for food. Elijah ate better in seclusion than he did among the multitudes.

The unclean woman had spent all that she possessed on doctors and yet had become even sicker. But when she went quietly and secretly to touch the hem of the Lord Jesus Christ’s garments, she was healed at once. (Matthew 9:20–22) Just as the woman quietly and unobserved except by the Lord was healed so would we find healing within quiet and purifying intentions.

St. Peter said, “Depart from me for I am a sinful man.” (Luke 5:8)

“My strength is made perfect in weakness.” (II Corinthians 12:9)

“For I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwells no good thing.” (Romans 7:18)

“For when I am weak, then I am strong.” (II Corinthians 12:10)

Only when we realize our bad condition and regret it, are we worthy of God’s grace. It is only in life in its quiet moments that we realize that knowing ourselves is the means to feeling close to God. Unless one is away from noise, away from the busy, preoccupied, multi-tasking world we cannot reach this realization. In quietness there is time to be contemplative of the day’s actions, feel regret for a regression, seek God’s mercy, and be sorrowful. The spirit when alone can cleanse itself and regroup.

> “Your Word is a Lamp to my feet and a Light to my Path.”
(Psalm 119: 105)

>“When you pray, enter your room and close your door.”
(Matthew 6: 6)

St. Paul, one of the greatest and most influential missionaries of the church, following the Lord’s appearance to him on the route to Damascus went to the Arabian Desert, east of Damascus where in the wilderness he spent as it is estimated, three years of quiet time with God and received from Him everything necessary for his life and for his mission of adding daily to the growth of the Holy Church. Although St. Paul was not among the disciples to physically see and follow the Lord Jesus Christ in his sought out quietness and meditations he knew God.

We know that St. John did not see the revelation until he was alone on the island of Patmos. There he dwelt in the spirit. (Revelation 1: 10)

Quiet times are essential for one’s well being, one’s prayers, and one’s need to strive for a pure heart. Ridding your heart and mind of all its worldly preoccupations, focusing on correction of one’s sinful ways, learning self-discipline, and adding quietness to your daily life activities can lead you to trusting the calm voice of God.

Be quiet in a place without movement, a place that is empty without people where you can hear nothing but the silence. When your spirit becomes quiet, take time to listen to the quietness, take time to look inside yourself and begin to know yourself as you are and with critical and careful self inspection begin to know God. As long as you see others around you, you will not see you.

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